

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 EURE-00 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03
TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 EPG-02 SIL-01
OMB-01 /086 W
-----031734Z 112169 /45

P 031710Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2374
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 12943

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: MORE STRIFE IN THE MAJORITY

REF: PARIS 12700

SUMMARY. THE WEEK ENDING MAY 1 WAS ONE OF THE MOST POLITICALLY TURBULENT IN RECENT MONTHS. ALTHOUGH THE GAULLISTS GAVE GOF A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, RPR LEADERS CLAUDE LABBE, YVES GUENA AND MICHEL DEBRE DELIVERED BLISTERING ATTACKS ON PRIME MINISTER BARRE AND HIS 12-MONTH PLAN. THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED BY THREATENING TO USE CONSTITUTIONAL MEASURES AT HIS DISPOSAL AND PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING HIMSELF STATED IN A TELEVISION INTERVIEW ON APRIL 29 THAT BARRE WOULD LEAD THE PRESENT MAJORITY INTO THE NEXT LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS AND THAT THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ASK AGAIN FOR A VOTE OF APPROVAL FROM
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THE ASSEMBLY MAJORITY. RPR PRESIDENT CHIRAC EMERGES MORE AND MORE AS MASTER OF CEREMONIES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE WEEK BEGINNING APRIL 24 STARTED OFF WITH PM BARRE'S REQUESTING A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN HIS 12-MONTH PLAN TO BRING FRANCE OUT OF ECONOMIC CRISIS (PARIS 12322). THE MAJORITY PARTIES DELI-

VERED THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, BUT RPR PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS LEVELED BLISTERING ATTACKS ON BARRE AND HIS PLANS. RPR GROUP LEADER CLAUDE LABBE EVEN WENT SO FAR AS TO STATE THAT WHILE THE GAULLISTS WOULD SUPPORT THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, THEY REALLY HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN BARRE AND HIS GOVERNMENT. IN A BRILLIANT SPEECH THAT ATTRACTED HEAVY APPLAUSE FROM ALL MAJORITY BENCHES, MICHEL DEBRE ATTACKED BARRE FOR INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO POLITICAL COMBAT IN THE FACE OF A MASSIVE ONSLAUGHT FROM THE COMMON PROGRAM OF THE LEFT. IN BARRE'S REPLY HE TOLD THE GAULLISTS THAT CONFIDENCE WAS NOT AN ELEMENT OF BARGAINING. EITHER THEY GAVE IT OR THEY REFUSED IT AND ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT. HE PLEDGED TO CONTINUE CARRYING OUT HIS PROGRAM, AND INTERPRETED THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE AS A MANDATE.

2. MOST SIGNIFICANT IN BARRE'S REPLY WAS HIS OBLIQUE THREAT MADE AT THE WEEK'S END OF USING ARTICLE 49 OF THE CONSTITUTION. IN EFFECT, THE GOVERNMENT CAN EITHER ASK FOR A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, AS WAS DONE FOR BARRE'S 12-MONTH PLAN, OR IT CAN USE A MODIFIED VERSION OF THE POCKET VETO. IN THE LATTER CASE, A LAW ENTERS INTO EFFECT WITH NO VOTE WITHIN 24 HOURS OF ITS DECLARATION BY GOF, UNLESS A MOTION OF CENSURE IS PASSED IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. IN THIS CASE IT WOULD BE INCUMBENT UPON SOME PART OF THE MAJORITY TO ACCEPT DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE OVERTHROW OF THE GOVERNMENT, AN ACT THE RPR IS LITTLE INCLINED TO MAKE. THIS MUSCLED REPLY TO RPR THREATS OF DECIDING THE GOVERNMENT'S FATE ON AN ISSUE

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BY ISSUE BASIS IS A FACTOR WHICH THE RPR MUST KEEP IN MIND WHEN PLANNING ITS POLICY FOR THE NEAR FUTURE.

3. TO ADD TO GOF'S WOES CHIRAC CALLED INTO QUESTION THE POLICIES OF LIONEL STOLERU, STATE SECRETARY FOR MANUAL LABOR, AND PAUL DIJOU, STATE SECRETARY FOR IMMIGRANT WORKERS. THIS OF COURSE TIES IN WITH THE RPR'S BELIEF THAT BARRE'S ECONOMIC PLANS CONCENTRATE TOO MUCH ON NUMBERS AND TOO LITTLE ON THE HUMAN FACTOR. PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING SUFFERED A FURTHER SETBACK WITH THE DRAMATIC RESIGNATION OF JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER, A RADICAL SOCIALIST AND LONG-TIME SUPPORTER OF THE PRESIDENT. JJSS HAD BEEN GIVEN A VAGUE JOB OF OVERSEEING REFORMS ONLY A FEW WEEKS BEFORE. IN THE MEANTIME, THE PARIS STOCK EXCHANGE HAS REACHED A 16-YEAR LOW AND, ON SUNDAY MAY 1 (MAY DAY), MASSIVE BUT NON-VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS TOOK PLACE THROUGHOUT FRANCE. FINALLY, THE PARIS GARBAGE STRIKE CONTINUES, WITH REFUSE COVERING THE SIDEWALKS.

4. ON APRIL 29, AFTER THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE AND THE BITTER DEBATE, GISCARD GAVE A TELEVISED INTERVIEW IN

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WHICH HE EMPHASIZED THAT BARRE WOULD LEAD THE PRESENT MAJORITY INTO THE NEXT LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. IN A REPLY TO DEBRE, GISCARD SAID THAT THE BEST POLITICS CONTINUE TO BE BARRE'S PROGRAM FOR ECONOMIC STABILIZATION. UNDERSCORING BARRE'S THREAT TO USE ARTICLE 49 OF THE CONSTITUTION, GISCARD STATED FLATLY THAT NEVER AGAIN WOULD THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT ASK FOR A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FROM THE ASSEMBLY. TRUE TO FORM, THE PRESIDENT KEPT HIS COOL, THEREBY PROVIDING THE ONLY CALM NOTE DURING THIS TROUBLED WEEK. HIS APPEARANCE WAS NECESSARY TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE MAINTAINS FULL CONFIDENCE IN BARRE DESPITE THE LASHING HE TOOK IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

5. SOME OBSERVERS ACCUSE THE RPR OF COMMITTING THE PERFECT CRIME; THAT IS TO SAY, ASSASSINATING THE PRIME

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MINISTER BUT LEAVING NO EVIDENCE OF THE CRIME COMMITTED OR THE WEAPON USED. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN EXACTLY WHAT THE RPR WANTS, BUT THE BEST ESTIMATE IS SOMETHING SIMILAR TO MASSIVE ECONOMIC STIMULUS PLAN SUCH AS THAT WHICH WAS LAUNCHED BY CHIRAC IN THE FALL OF 1975 AND A HALT TO THE TYPE OF RESTRUCTURING OF INDUSTRIES THAT LEADS TO MASSIVE LAY-OFFS. THIS IS ALL TANGENTIAL TO ITS MAIN SHORT-TERM WISH OF GETTING ONE OF ITS OWN MEN INTO MATIGNON. AS THINGS NOW STAND, CHIRAC REMAINS THE APPARENT CAPTAIN OF THE MAJORITY'S FATE. CENTRIST AND INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN LEADERS ARE EXPRESSING INTEREST IN ALIGNING THEMSELVES MORE THAN THEY HAVE IN THE PAST WITH CHIRAC, AND THE RPR IS THE ONLY MAJORITY PARTY ATTRACTING ANY NEW ADHERENTS (ALBEIT MOST COME FROM OTHER MAJORITY PARTIES, NOT THE OPPOSITION).

6. COMMENT: THE RPR IS SIMPLY FILLING THE LEADERSHIP GAP LEFT BY THE PRESIDENT. ITS GAME WITH BARRE, HOWEVER, IS MORE INTRICATE. IF THEY SUPPORT THE PLANS, BARRE GETS THE CREDIT FOR WHATEVER SUCCESSES THESE PLANS BRING THE MAJORITY. IF THEY TORPEDO THEM IN A TOO OBVIOUS FASHION, THEY CAN BE BLAMED FOR THE "DOWNFALL" OF GOF (SOME COMMENTATORS WERE TALKING OF THE END OF A REGIME). THUS THE CARROT AND STICK TECHNIQUE MUST BE WIELDED WITH GREAT CARE. MITTERRAND HAS REPORTEDLY TOLD HIS LIEUTENANTS THAT CHIRAC IS ENEMY NUMBER ONE. THIS ALONE IS AN INDICATION OF THE MEASURE OF CHIRAC'S FORCE ON THE POLITICAL SCENE.
GAMMON

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